

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 /079 W
-----260323Z 102641 /75-61

R 251305Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6058
INFO AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY KIGALI
AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 0314

E.O.: 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, NI, UG, CG, BY
SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH NIGERIAN AMBASSADOR TO BURUNDI

REF : 76 BUJUMBURA 894

1. GILBERT OKANY, NIGERIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER TO UGANDA
(AND RESIDENT IN KAMPALA) PAID A CALL ON ME MARCH 25
DURING HIS SECOND VISIT TO BURUNDI, WHERE HE HAS BEEN
ACCREDITED SINCE LAST OCTOBER (REFTEL). HIS MAIN PURPOSE IS
TO SIZE UP THE NEW BAGAZA REGIME HERE FOR LAGOS, WHICH
WOULD LIKE TO MAKE ITS PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE FELT MORE
STRONGLY IN SUCH SMALL AFRICAN STATES AS BURUNDI. I GAVE
HIM A GENERALLY UP-BEAT READING OF DEVELOPMENTS IN
BUJUMBURA, URGED HIM TO PROMOTE AN EXCHANGE OF AMBASSADORS
HERE (HE THINKS BURUNDI MAY BE INCLINING TO OPEN AN EMBASSY
IN LAGOS), AND SUGGESTED NIGERIA SEND SOME ENGLISH
TEACHERS TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

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2. OKANY REPEATED HIS GLOOMY EVALUATION OF CONDITIONS IN
UGANDA (REFTEL) AND SAID THAT COUNTRY'S FOREIGN POLICY
PROBLEMS STEMMED MAINLY FROM AMIN'S INSATIABLE MANIA FOR
PUBLICITY AND SELF-AGGRANDIZEMENT. FOR AFRICANS IN UGANDA,

AMIN WAS DEADLY, AND THE KILLINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES CON-

TINUED ON A MASS SCALE. FOREIGN JOURNALISTS AND TV REPORTERS WHO ONLY VISITED THE COUNTRY FOR A FEW DAYS SAW A DECEPTIVE SURFACE NORMALCY; ONE HAD TO BE RESIDENT IN THE COUNTRY TO APPRECIATE THE ENORMITY OF THE CRIMINALITY. FORTUNATELY, AMIN RARELY TOOK HIS MURDEROUS INCLINATIONS OUT ON EUROPEANS RESIDENTS. HE LIKED TO TEASE THEM TO GET WORLD ATTENTION. OKANY SAYS IT WAS OBVIOUS FROM THE START OF THE TROUBLE WITH AMERICANS IN FEBRUARY THAT AMIN HAD NEVER HAD ANY INTENTION OF HOLDING THE GREAT MEETING. IN FACT, AMIN HAD TOLD ONE OF OKANY'S COLLEAGUES AT THE OUTSET OF THE ADVENTURE THAT HE WAS PULLING IT OFF JUST TO MAKE THE U.S. "SIT UP AND TAKE NOTICE" OF HIM.

3. BECAUSE OF THE INTERNAL DISORDER AND ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN, OKANY INSISTED THAT THE UGANDAN ARMY HAD NO CAPABILITIES IN A NORMAL MILITARY SENSE. HE SCOFFED AT RUMORS CURRENT IN ZAIRE THAT SEVERAL THOUSAND UGANDAN TROOPS MIGHT BE POISED ON THE WESTERN BORDER TO INTRUDE INTO ZAIRE. IT DID NOT MATTER HOW MANY PLANES AND TANKS THE USSR GAVE TO AMIN; THEY WOULD NEVER BE OPERATIONAL IN ANY SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS, AND THE SOVIETS KNEW IT. MOREOVER, OKANY DISCOUNTED ANY THOUGHT THAT MOSCOW HAD ANY INFLUENCE OVER AMIN. OKANY BELIEVES THAT AMIN FULLY RECOGNIZES THE DANGER OF TOO CLOSE AN ASSOCIATION WITH THE RUSSIANS, "JUST AS WE (NIGERIANS) DO". OKANY SAID HE BELIEVED THERE WERE A VERY FEW CUBANS IN UGANDA, BUT THEY WERE NOT RPT NOT PLAYING ANY MILITARY ROLE. THOUGH AMIN WAS A DISGRACE TO AFRICA, OKANY THOUGHT IT WOULD PROBABLY BE SOME TIME BEFORE UGANDA COULD WRIGGLE OUT OF HIS GRIP.

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